

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

## A CLASSICAL LAS VEGAS HOME



Artifice and theater are the lifeblood of Las Vegas. Along the blazing Strip, tourists can sample the glory of ancient Egypt, the grandeur that was Rome, and the splendor of Gay Paree. But not every exercise in historical stagecraft there is mired in gargantuan kitsch. The house that architect [William Hablinski](#) and interior designers Alexandra and Michael Misczynski of [Atelier AM](#) created for a power couple in the gaming industry belongs to an altogether different category of contrivance—one that includes the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, the Breakers, and other magnificently executed tributes to faraway places and distant eras.

The clients had traveled extensively throughout Italy and were enraptured by its classical architecture. “The design is a confluence of old and new elements, ranging from 16th-century Palladian villas in the Veneto and more rustic 15th-century Italian farmhouses to the kinds of treatments typical of villa renovations in the mid-20th century,” says the Los Angeles–based Hablinski. “In both the materials and craftsmanship, we were striving for authenticity and substance.”

In practical terms, those references translated into an axial plan organized around a central courtyard in a classic nine-square arrangement; grand loggias and galleries; and finely wrought moldings, architraves, friezes, and other period details. The clients’ vision also demanded the use of stone—and plenty of it. Hablinski selected Roman travertine as the primary building material, deploying it on the exterior as well as throughout the interior of the 19,500-square-foot house in both smooth-cut and rustic, broken-face finishes.

The basic architectural scheme was set—and indeed the foundations poured—when Hablinski enlisted L.A.’s Atelier AM to assume responsibility for the residence’s interiors after the original designer exited the project.

“Bill’s layout, with all its imposing volumes, was in keeping with the clients’ image of a grand Italian villa,” Michael Misczynski says. “But they also wanted something warm and welcoming, along the lines of a Tuscan farmhouse. Our challenge was to reconcile those directives.”

A hallmark of the Misczynskis’ work is the couple’s reverence for objects with texture, patina, and other signs that represent the passage of time. This applies equally to building materials and furnishings. Their strategy for moderating the formality of the house involved the use of rough, aged terra-cotta tiles—as opposed to marble—for interior and exterior floors, and weathered ceiling beams rather than stately coffers.

Rising to a height of 32 feet at its peak, the living room is covered by a pitched glass roof in a strategic bit of architectural legerdemain meant to suggest that the space had once been an alfresco courtyard; terra-cotta floors covered by a humble woven-hemp carpet buttress the illusion. The designers divided the potentially intimidating space into a collection of intimate seating areas, among them cloistered niches draped in sumptuous Fortuny fabric. They also added monumental elements, such as a pair of 11-foot-tall Venetian chandeliers custom made by the famed Italian glassmaker Seguso, to temper the scale of the soaring room.

In a very real sense, this house—and the capacious living room in particular— provides an anchor for the clients’ extended clan, which includes three grown children who all live nearby. “The family is extremely close,” Michael says. “They gather here every week for dinner. People watch football in the living room and bar, and the grandchildren play the piano. These spaces have to be comfortable.”

Throughout the home, the Misczynskis orchestrated harmonic compositions of furniture, art, and objects drawn from widely varying historical epochs. The entrance gallery sets the tone for this cross-cultural symphony with a Roman sculpture from the second century B.C., an 18th-century Italian gilt-wood console, a contemporary bronze chandelier by artisan Philippe Anthonioz, and two 19th-century Florentine cabinets housing Tang-dynasty earthenware and a group of ancient Bactrian alabaster objects that date from the second millennium B.C. The mix is, in a word, breathtaking.

To gather this king’s ransom of *objets de vertu*, the Misczynskis turned to auctions, international art fairs, and venerable antiquarians, including the Belgian dealer Axel Vervoordt, who provided many of the timeworn pieces that add depth and nuance to the skillfully layered decor. “In addition to shopping trips, we traveled to Italy with the clients to look at houses and distill certain details that might be relevant for this project,” Alexandra says. “Those excursions helped clarify the tone we wanted to achieve in the decorating.”

Contemporary artworks, such as a signature Anish Kapoor copper disk and a John McCracken mirrored plinth, flicker vibrantly in a setting so redolent of history and age. Two Damien Hirst butterfly pictures, in arched neo-Gothic frames, appear to have been tailor-made for the dining room. The Willem de Kooning painting that graces the entrance gallery and the Marc Chagall canvas that hangs in the bar were gifts from the clients’ children.

It was the children who banded together to convince their mother to complete the house after the project stalled following the unexpected death of their father in 2009.

“The moment when she finally moved in last year was obviously very emotional,” Michael recalls. “This house was their dream, and the spirit of her husband is in every stone. It’s a testament to the clarity of their vision, their accomplishments, and the strength of their family. Ultimately, I think it has brought her a lot of joy.”

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